

We are still early in a new year and it's fun to learn new things about each other.

**ICE BREAKER QUESTION: If you had the available time and money wasn't an obstacle, what would be your ideal vacation?**

### What Jesus Is After In His Followers

Preferences and priorities reveal something that is true about a person. In this week's message we looked at what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount that very much revealed what was important to him about the law and righteousness:

#### **Matthew 5:17–20**

**“Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.**

**Question: What was a key takeaway for you regarding this week's message?**

When Jesus says that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, this seems like a pretty tall order. A commitment to carefully

observing the commandments was a key component of the teaching and life of the Pharisees. But in Matthew 23 Jesus gives us a clue about what he might mean:

**Matthew 23:23-24:**

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup> Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel!**

A tithe was owed to the Temple from any crops harvested. Jesus here refers to the practice of tithing even from a small herb garden. Jesus doesn't fault the faithfulness in this, but he faults his opponents for missing the point of the teaching all together.

**Question: Look closely at the verses above. What does Jesus say is the point of the teaching?**

**Question: How can embody these values and thus exceed the Pharisees in righteousness?**

### The Spirit of The Law

Jesus is emphasizing that we must keep the spirit of the Law, but what is the spirit of the law? Let's look at these other verses from Matthew that were highlighted in the sermon this Sunday:

**Matthew 22:35-40**

**When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?”**

**37 He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the greatest and most important command. 39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”**

You will notice here that Jesus is asked to name one law, but he gives two.

**Question: In light of what we have studied so far, why do you think Jesus gave listed both of these commands as the greatest, rather than just the first?**

In these verses Jesus makes it clear that to truly keep the spirit of the law we do so by loving God and loving our neighbor. This is really just another way of saying that the weightier matters of the law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Just as Jesus came to fulfill the law, we fulfill the law when we live a life marked by love. And this love is shown to us by God when he extends his grace to us. And God pours that love into us by the work of the Holy Spirit. The grace of God offers us not only forgiveness, but renewed life in the Spirit. And life in the Spirit is life in love.

### **Prayer**

Let's take time to check in on prayer requests and offer new prayers to God. As part of our prayer time, let's pray for our church as well, that the Lord would allow us to see friends and family members be saved and baptized.

### **Announcements**

Dr. LeRoy R. Bartel is leading a study of Ecclesiastes entitled “Life, This Side of Heaven!” 8:45 a.m. on Sundays in the Café. Together we'll explore

what God-inspired “Wisdom” Ecclesiastes gives us for “Living This Side of Heaven!” You won’t want to miss this!

Calling all ladies! The Dawn Ladies retreat is for you! November 18th-20th we will be in Springtown, tx for a ladies' retreat. it is \$260 for meals and accommodations.

On October 9th we will give tours of the completed upstairs renovation for our youth and young adults! Come and see how your giving has impacted the future.